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# Bird Poems

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By Miles A. Davis

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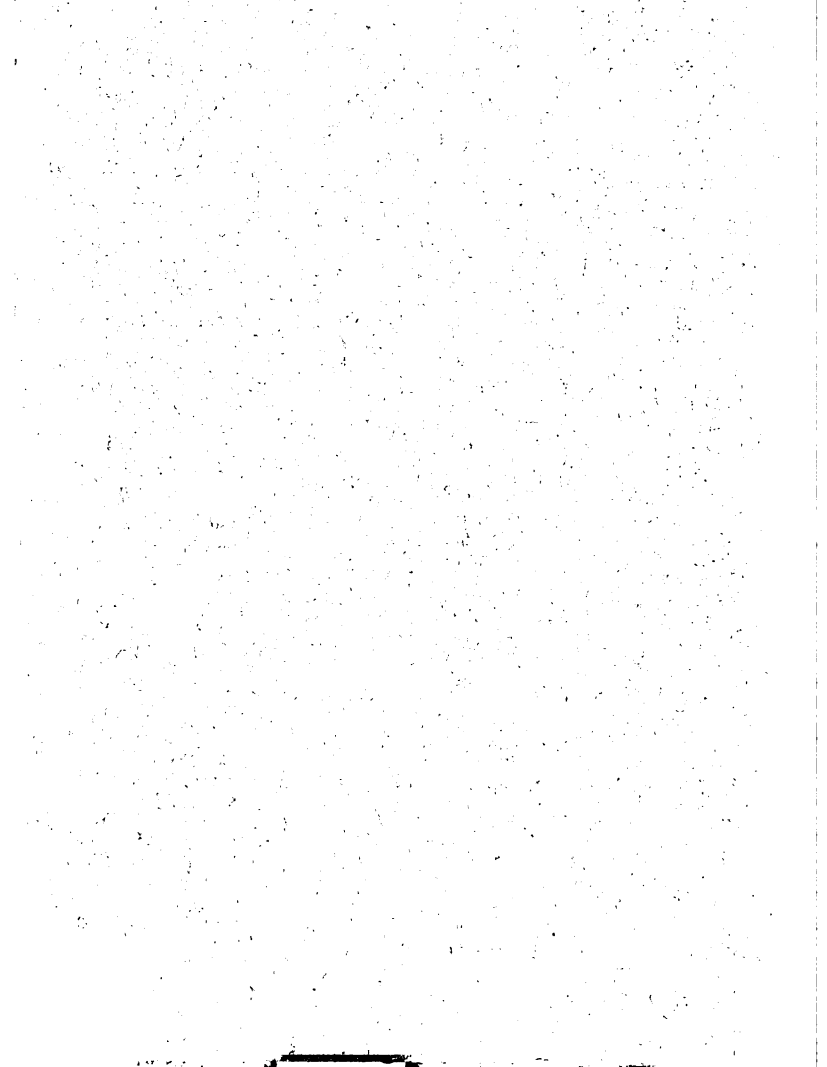
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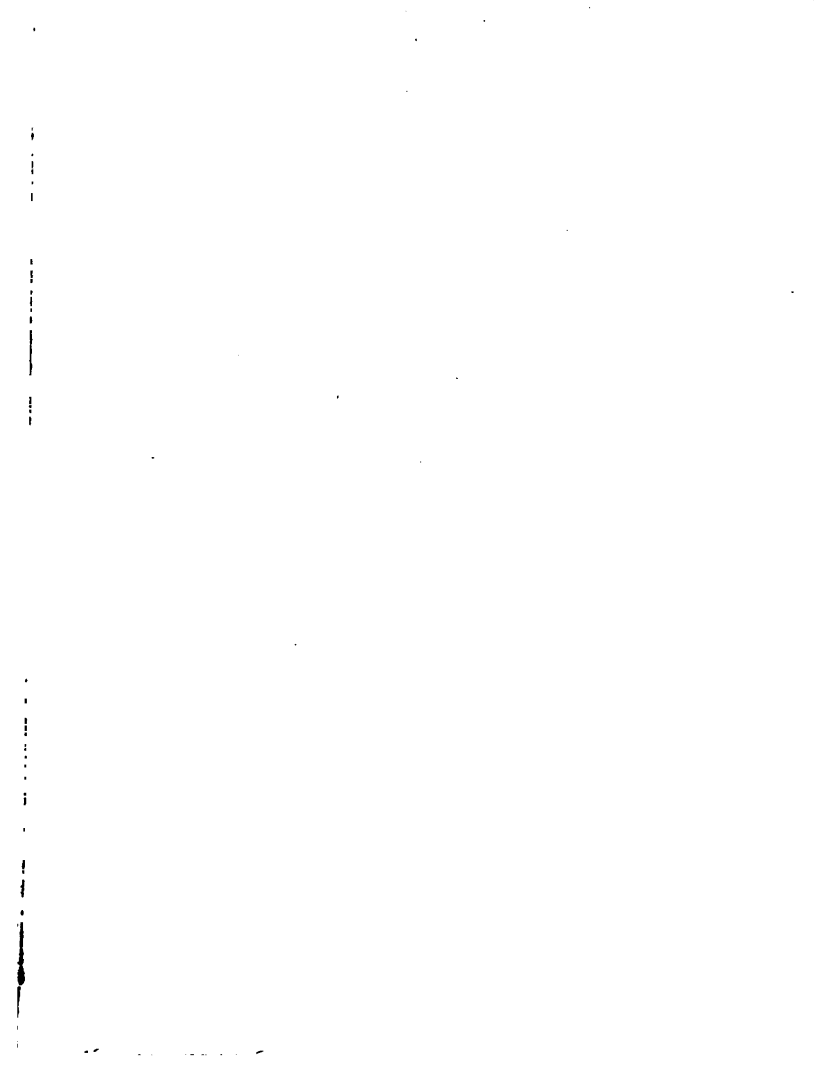
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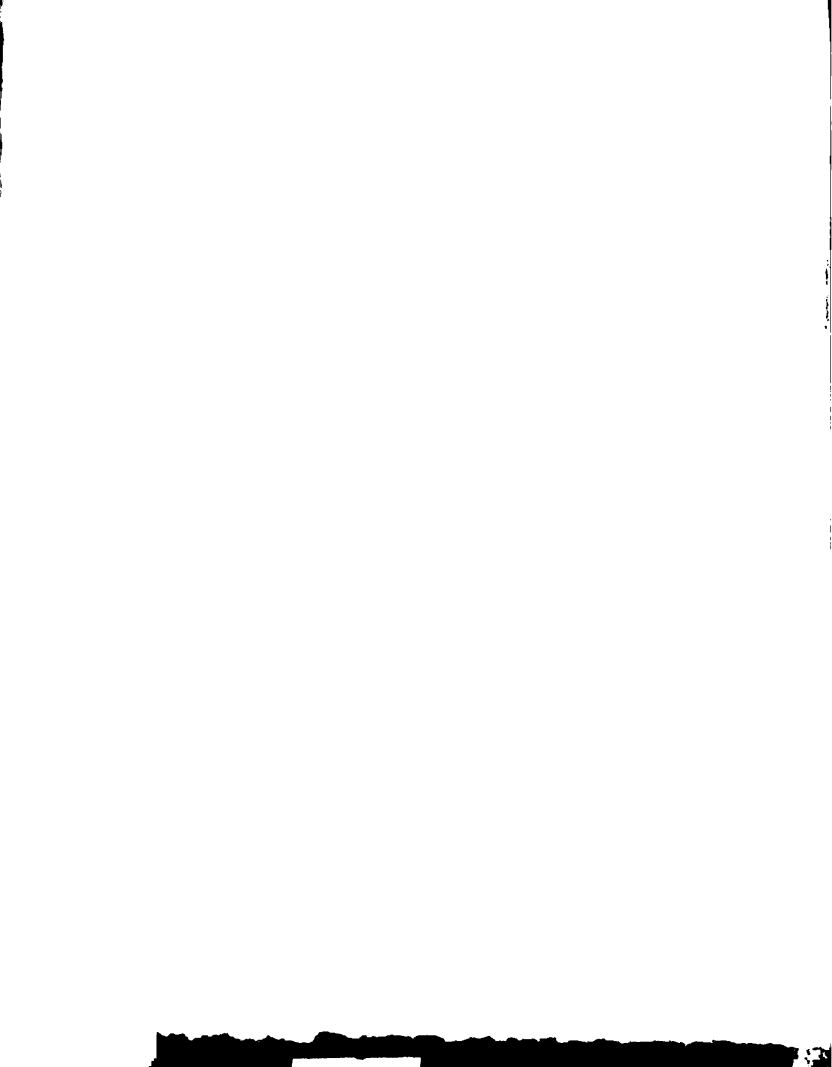
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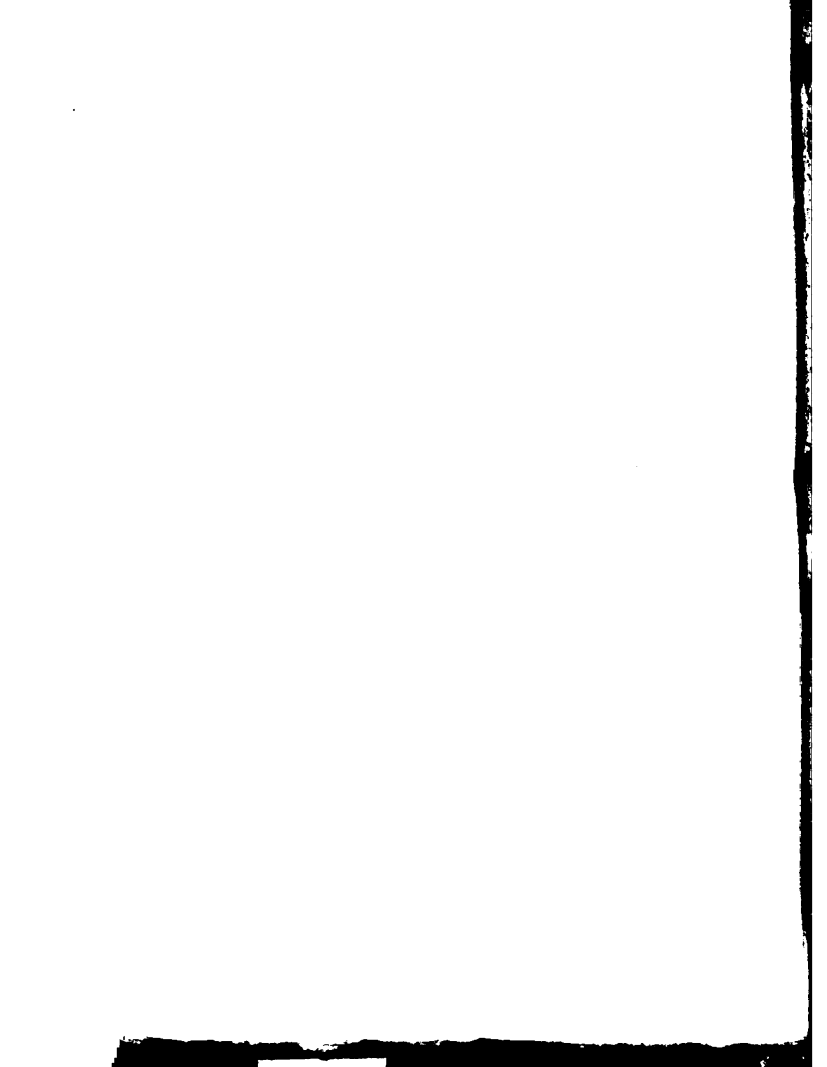














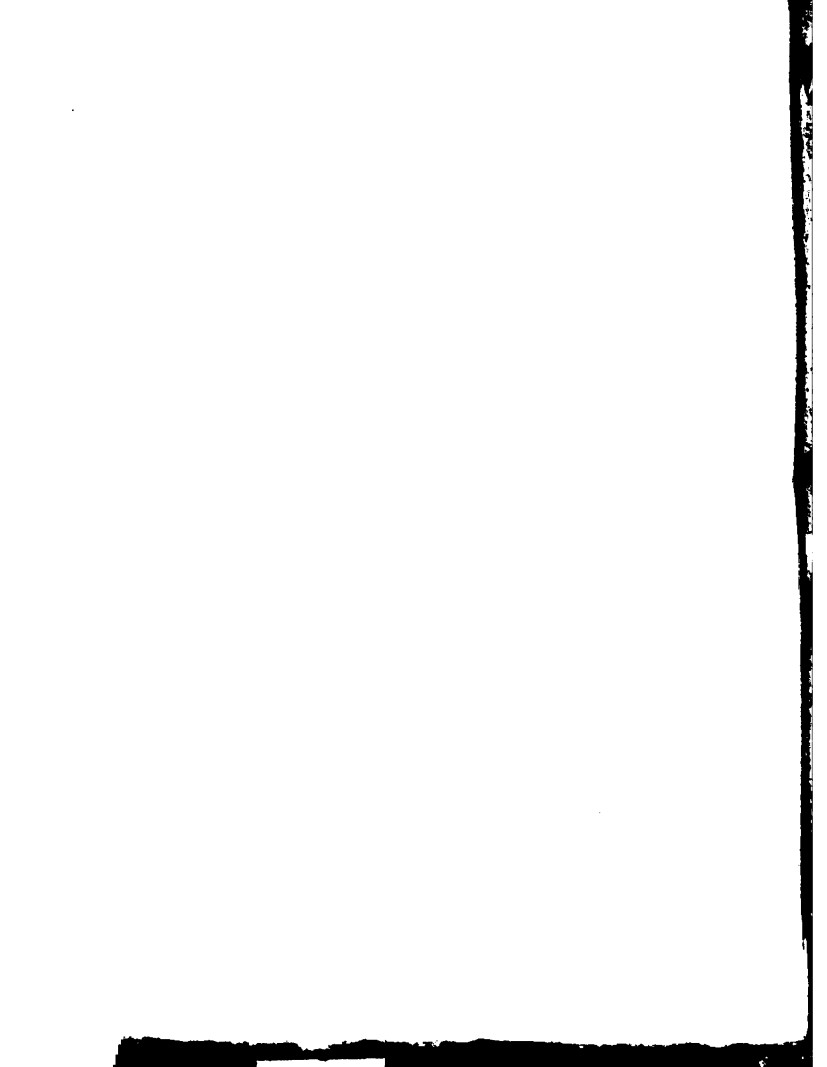
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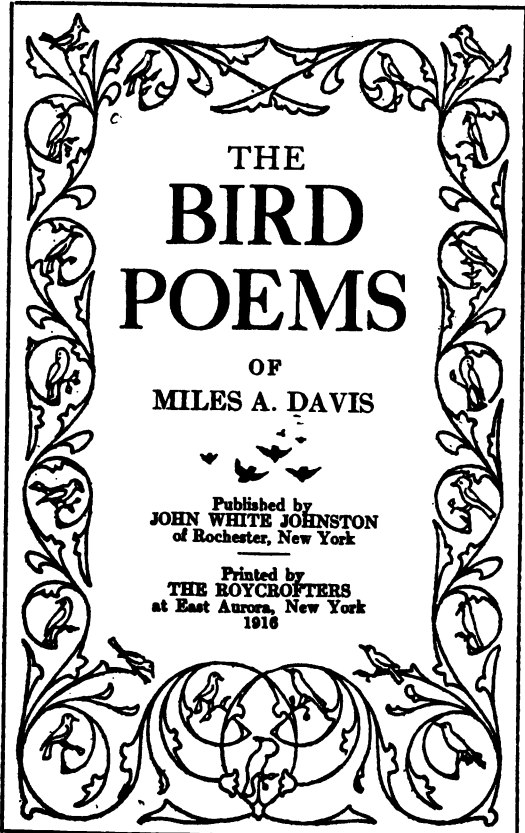
OF  
MILES A. DAVIS

Published by  
**JOHN WHITE JOHNSTON**  
of Rochester, New York

Printed by  
**THE ROYCROFTERS**  
at East Aurora, New York  
1916





The book cover features a decorative border composed of stylized floral and bird motifs. The border is rectangular, with ornate scrollwork at the corners and along the sides. Various birds, including swans, are depicted within the circular and oval frames of the border. The central text is arranged in a formal, centered layout.

# THE BIRD POEMS

OF  
MILES A. DAVIS

Three small, stylized birds are shown in flight, positioned centrally above the publisher's information.

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**1916**

**BY J. W. JOHNSTON**

**ROCHESTER**

**N. Y.**



## INTRODUCTION

BY

T. GILBERT PEARSON

**N**OTHING seems more natural and proper as a subject of poetic meditation than birds—those seemingly free and joyous spirits of the air, lovely in contour, in color, and in grace of movement, saluting us with harmonious greetings as we wake refreshed at dawn, and wooing us to slumber with gentle notes as twilight closes the day. Birds combine in a singular degree to the poet's eye, beauty and sentiment. They typify in their vernal coming the revival of those delights that belong to and constitute summer; and immortality is suggested by

their annual return, as if again and again they had defeated the hateful winter. Thus they seem associated with the bright side of nature—creatures of perpetual spring and merriment. "Joyous birds sing madrigals," exclaims old Marlowe, thinking of tuneful shepherds and their romantic lives amid hillside flowers as they watch the feeding sheep.

There is somewhat, too, of the sweet mystery that poets love in the lives of birds that come and go we know not exactly whence or whither; and that woo their mates and cherish their young in leafy bowers we hardly know how or where. This excites the wonder that made Wordsworth ask of the doubly mystic cuckoo—

"Shall I call thee Bird

Or but a wandering voice?"

Such, no doubt, are the feelings that have led to the singing of the verses written in this little volume; and no one who knows

our woodland birds—and especially he who knows them most truly—but will rejoice that men who have the impulse and gift of poetic expression try to communicate in verse the peculiar pleasure derived from them in our fields and around our homes. A world without birds would be a world without natural poetry.





## THE BREATH OF SPRING

**O**N southern shores where trade winds bide  
With tropic tales beyond the tide,  
From out the unseen depths of air  
A silent mystery everywhere.  
Who shall the Equinox define,  
Or once the vernal reign outline?  
What force Titanic touched the earth  
With flower and song and tender mirth?

Our northern birds in southern clime,  
Responsive to the rhythm of time,  
Are first to feel the mighty glow  
Of secret forces 'neath the snow,  
Or what the boundless breezes bring  
That throb in every stroke of wing,  
That haunts the ripple of the stream  
And buds prophetic in our dream.

A soft wand waves within the skies,  
A seeming bound to Paradise ;  
On every lulling breeze is balm,  
With every dawning day the calm  
Sets in along the solar ray,  
Till time and sense ecstatic sway  
Rounds in the glory of the years—  
This breath of Spring through all the spheres.







## THE ROBIN

'TIS all the same sweet songs I 've heard  
From throats of many a music bird,  
Swung yearly 'round in colors gay  
And all alike with thine today.  
The same untiring songs I hear,  
As old, as new, as full of cheer  
As ever robin sang before—  
Recalling scenes forever o'er.

My spirit hath been winter-clad ;  
A waste of white mine eyes made sad ;  
By scores to six I count the days  
Of polar warp and woof all ways,  
But Winter's keenest frost and wind  
Thy Southern home doth never find ;  
To thee the winters never come,  
To thee is naught but Summer's hum.

Adown the avenues of air  
A fragrance lulleth everywhere;  
O wondrous bird! what music waits  
Apast the lawns and garden gates;  
A tremor thrills through forest shades,  
Romancing all th' eternal glades  
To satiate thy home at morn  
And recompense for music born.

The amplitude of southern shores  
Today before our northern doors  
Are spread upon thy dewy wing  
In notes of sunny lands ye bring;  
Migration northward through the sky  
Portends the reign of Summer nigh,  
And bending blooms that 'round us ope  
Return the season's annual hope.

The floating music in thy voice  
Is bidding us with thee rejoice.  
I fain would touch the wondrous keys  
That dangle 'round the forest leas,  
And feel the swell from hidden jars  
That's sealed afar beyond the stars,  
Or hear æolian strains sublime  
Come wafting through the woods of time.



## BLUE-BIRDS

**N**OW northward points the solar ray,  
Streams o'er the world a new-born day ;  
We hear the wind in frolic roar,  
The stormy passage as before  
Of myriad wings from morn to night  
Beat on the air in wild affright,  
Where sun and cloud and storm appear—  
Prophetic voices of the year.

What hint is there of morning light  
That westward o'er the hills of night  
Doth whisper in the blue-bird bowers  
That Winter broods o'er Northern flowers?  
What secret springs are these that bring  
A blue-bird northward on the wing,  
Or tells him of a milder clime  
Ere Spring has hinted of its time ?

Teach us the instinct of the day  
The blue-bird revels in his lay.  
He knows the breezes free and strong,  
He brings the sunshine in his song ;  
Whatever tender memories float  
In rapture from his tuneful throat,  
His wings have touched both hemispheres  
Of sun and snow, of smiles and tears.

Though the rainbow of hope the blue-bird brings  
Be lost in the depths of a thousand things,  
The heart that is thrilled, the soul that is stirred  
By the flood of song from the joyous bird,  
Brings back the dreamy days behest ;  
The youth upon the mountain quest,  
The woods and streams of childhood hours,  
The balm-distilling summer showers.

Though March winds roar along our way,  
Though tempests riot all the day,  
Yet still above the stormy track—  
As o'er the ocean drifts the wrack—  
There gleams the light through boundless blue  
To tint the earth with heaven's own hue,  
And all the raptures ear hath heard  
Resound of thee, blue-bird.



## BALTIMORE ORIOLE

**A** TROPIC tinge of orange grove  
Delights the eye whene'er we see  
A gaudy dashing type of Jove  
With flaming plumage in a tree.  
There is a hint of rainbow land,  
Of sunny banks and Southern flowers,  
Of golden dawns here at hand  
And basking dreams of happy hours.

The sunset and the dawn appear  
Upon his smoothly rounded breast,  
And with the solar crowning year,  
We know that on the vernal crest,  
Will swing and sing this bird of flame,  
His "cheer up! cheer up!" song of yore,  
That seems anew though cast the same  
As in the matchless Mays before.

When warm and leafy days are rife  
O'er earth and softly bending skies ;  
When Nature teems with joys of life,  
The oriole sounds his glad surprise,  
And " purty bird ! purty bird ! purty bird ! "  
Invites a smile in his jolly conceit,  
As out of the bow'rs his vocal is heard  
Of thrilling tenor and chord of sweet.

The way the hang-bird builds his nest,  
Suspended 'neath a swaying limb,  
A lesson teaches of the quest  
To find the balance on a rim  
'Tween gravitation, wind and storm ;  
And yearly seeks in vain his home—  
A transitory dream of form—  
A plumaged pilgrim far to roam.

A feathered beauty bold and free,  
A joyous creature of the dawn,  
A winged harbinger is he  
On troubled mortals wont to fawn.  
Celestial hopes are in his cheer ;  
Though gaily plumed for tropic clime,  
He loves the Northern hemisphere  
Where Freedom is the torch of time.



## THE OVEN BIRD

**H**STRANGE ventriloquist is he,  
Who seems afar when close at hand,  
And near when distant far to lea ;  
With other birds as in a band  
You hear his rising, falling notes,  
Borne on the wind a spirit voice,  
Attuned with other warbling throats  
That in the forest vales rejoice.

Now daintily on tip-toe walks,  
And casts his eye on clustering limbs  
Whereon he chatters in his talks  
Of " teacher ! teacher ! " tender hymns  
A pleading ere his oven forms,  
And walls and roofs it in with leaves  
Secure against the wind and storms—  
His wondrous architecture weaves.



## THE HUMMING BIRD

**H**ART thou the heaven-winged sprite  
Far out of paradise alight  
Upon the air, a being sent  
From out the starry firmament  
To revel in the solar stream ;  
Transition of a boundless dream ;  
Some spirit glorified in wings  
To blend with earth celestial things?

Ethereal poise in summer skies,  
The balm of tropic splendor lies  
Suspended in the atmosphere  
Of Northern flow'rs the yearning year  
Creates, and thou, the gilded dawn,  
O'er continents and seas art drawn  
Through azure depths on ceaseless flight,  
Blithe creature of immortal light ;



With scarcely sound of humming wings  
To droning air of summer brings  
The flora tale of countless flowers,  
Borne on thy wing to Northern bowers.  
That gently flowing hum, I ween,  
On pinions floating, seldom seen,  
That come and go as sunbeams trace  
The never-ending realms of space.





## BOB-O'-LINK

**LIBRETTO.**—"Poor teeter pooter, roley poley tinkle tootle tinkle link Tommy Denny toodle loodle pay me popsidoodle tinkle linkle link, Bob-o'-linkum linkum link, see see see, wilt it ! wilt it ! wilt it ! wilt it !" with instantaneous rapidity and without an instant's pause.

**I**N part he says, or seems to say,  
As if upon the bridge at bay,  
With challenge of the notes and bars  
That line the limits of the stars  
In human rhapsody of tone,  
A voluntary vast and lone,  
And countless more no pen can write—  
This winged lute in black and white.

Enraptured with our Northern clime  
When summer suns are in their prime,  
The Bob-o'-Link his concerts pour  
In wildest ecstasy and more  
O'er meadows gay his roundelay  
Resounds throughout the dreamy day ;  
A lilting tilting scale along—  
Fantasia of a world in song.

As if a spirit from the skies  
His choice libration ere he flies  
A stalk of grass to poise his wing ;  
The only creature that can sing  
A full orchestral symphony  
With roistering rounded harmony,  
Vibrating every chord and note  
That gushes from his throbbing throat.

A jolly, joyous bird is he,  
A minstrel brimming o'er with glee,  
A rippling laughter in the air,  
A soul forever freed of care ;  
When from the South the reed-bird comes,  
The mellow hush of summer hums  
Attune his harp of many strings,  
And poising, floating, flying, sings !

The gamut of the Bob-o'-Link,  
A revel o'er a boundless brink,  
A purling liquid dream of gold,  
Sonata of the spheres unfold ;  
Let all the wild imagining  
Invest itself in soaring wing,  
Yet words are tame and can not sound  
The tones that riot in his bound.

With swiftest touch his violin,  
With all the music rolling in  
And out a hurricane of notes  
He plays, and every breeze that floats,  
Vibrates beneath his magic bow ;  
At first so silken soft and low  
And rising, spreading, swift as light,  
Pours o'er the meadows his delight.





## THE WOOD THRUSH

**NOTE.**—The wood thrush is one of the sweetest singers in Birdland, and is a neat bird with soft brown coat and a white vest densely dotted with black. He sings from dawn to dusk, from the deep woods; for he loves to dwell where it is cool and shadowy. He is sometimes called the bell bird, from the character of his song. He is exceedingly shy, and will ordinarily escape one's notice; so if you are near he will sit motionless, his bright eyes peering out to see what you will do next. If he concludes you are getting too close he will fly away so still that you wonder where he has vanished. The nest is made of loose sticks and fragments of leaves woven together with soft earth. He prefers a tall bush with interlacing branches. She usually lays four eggs, somewhat smaller than the robin's, but similar in coloring. The wings and back of the wood thrush are a bright cinnamon brown, and his head a brighter hue. The tail is olive brown, and the under parts are white or light gray, with black spots, except the throat and the central part of the breast. One is fortunate who ever gets in close view of this sweet warbler of the woods. John Burroughs says of the song of the wood thrush, "It is the sweetest sound in Nature."

**F**ROM far off woods, as from a distant shore,  
Aeolian melody comes wafting o'er  
The shady solitudes in summer days,  
The harp of a thousand strings in one, and plays  
As to an audience of forest dells,  
And with a witchery of note foretells  
The rapture melting all the spheres of song—  
A bird soprano clear and sweet and strong.

Shy thrush who only courts the depths of shade,  
When in the haunts of men are fortunes made  
By those whose song is tame compared to thine ;  
They can not voice the woods, however fine  
Their measured technic of the sounding board,  
Nor yet thy liquid melody afford.  
The spirit of the forest wild and free  
Is in that voice of matchless ecstasy.

From out the echoing aisles of the forest wilds  
The music of a sounding world beguiles  
With thrilling rapture all the summer rare—  
The queen of song, the forest thrush is there—  
And all the welkin rings beyond compare,  
While shadowy woods are tingling in the air  
And every leaf is swaying in the song  
That comes a-Thrushing all the world along !

With shy retiring grace that 's half afraid,  
He shuns the stare of critics in the shade ;  
In modest brown and softest tints of gray  
The sweetest singer of the woodland way,  
Like merit never boastingly arrayed,  
Serene in gift whereat the powers played  
Within the fount of life, and from the skies  
A bird is sounding notes of paradise.

He hides from haunts of men, this creature rare ;  
In vain for years I sought him everywhere.  
With the crescendo of his voice afar  
I fancied it an echo from a star,  
And when at last he perched upon a limb  
Right near my seat and made my senses swim  
With his o'erwhelming rapture of all time,  
The spot and scene were sacred and sublime.





## THE MOCKING BIRD

**H**WINGED orchestra of ambient air  
Comes forth the scales of music to ensnare  
And pipe them all in matchless roundelay.  
No other bird doth all the harp-strings play  
Of all his feathered fellows everywhere ;  
None other could the very heaven's dare  
In piping forest, field, or meadow notes  
That thrilled from many a score of happy throats.

Wherever roses glorify the earth  
Wherever thrilling harmonies have birth,  
This mimic of the sea and land outpours  
In rippling song a world of troubadours.  
Encaged or free in all the circling sky,  
No winged messenger of air can vie  
With him in voicing birds of every flight,  
Who tribute takes and tunes in new delight.





## THE STORMY PETREL

**B**EHOLD ! how flies the genii of the sea !  
Have care, ye brawny sailors by the lea !  
Far out of sight there looms the wind-blown  
    wave  
That laughs at the reeling sail of the helpless  
    brave,  
Controlling th' energies of the billowy deep  
That mystic eye undew'd where mermaids weep ;  
The chamois gaze his answering eye ne'er caught  
Nor sea-gulls scream with terror ever fraught.  
The stormy petrel wings his wonted way,  
Prophetic bird, amid the mildest day.  
Ye sailors, ho ! a storm ! a gale ! ahoy !  
Haul in and reef your sails ! Be quick, my boy !  
Old Neptune with his trident and sea shell  
For boat, can ride no surf like this, and well  
Each gallant tar may thank the timely bird  
For warning ere the coral depths were stirred.  
A rousing cheer ! Huzza for the Ocean Fowl  
That rollicks in the spray when tempests howl !



## CHICK-A-DEE

**T**HROUGH cold and rave of wind and sleet  
The cheery "chick-a-dee-dee-deet,"  
From field and fallow, wood and wheat,  
Soprano singer, "dee-dee-deet";  
A whirl of song—a snowy fleet—  
A rippling "chick-a-dee-dee-deet."  
Would you a winter sunbeam greet,  
Behold the joyous "dee-dee-deet."

Have you an ear for music sweet?  
Hear then the "chick-a-dee-dee-deet,"  
Whose measured quick vibrations meet  
And swirl in "chick-a-dee-dee-deet."  
Bright, bounding, gay and dapper neat,  
In resonance of "dee-dee-deet";  
Within his heart the round world's beat  
In accents of the "dee-dee-deet."



## WILD GEESE

**O**N white gray wings they flee the cold  
Far sweeping from the Northland shore  
O'er lake and stream and landscapes old,  
And southward herald all before.  
Of what portent in Arctic air  
Their snowy pinions tell no tales  
Of half a year of night that 's there,  
Or what the southing sun exhales.

I've seen the spring-time northward flight  
These feathered sages take, and heard  
The signal " conk " by day and night,  
As when this wild resound of bird  
Proclaimed the polar season o'er ;  
And yet the mystery of cause  
That stirs to flight, mocks all our lore,  
Beyond us are the wild goose laws.



## SNOW BIRDS

**I**SEE the Arctic birds in bright array  
Astir to winnow wintry winds away,  
Are sailing in the snowy-laden gales,  
And with their thrilling throats and feathery  
    flails  
Beat wild tattoos with whir of wing and song,  
More wild and gay when tempest howls prolong.  
Blow winds, that seem to rake the slanting caves  
Of roof and sky, and sift the frosty leaves,  
And pour through every waiting aperture  
When nothing man can from his home allure !  
Then comes our breezy Northland songster bold,  
With coat of mail from lands forever cold.  
A voice to man these messengers of air,  
Which says for every fate your heart prepare.



## WINGS IN WINTER

**I**T is the wise and brave who follow on  
Where pathways never lead through drifting  
    snows,  
And have in mind some traveler of air  
Belated with the plaint of Northern climes  
And polar winds forever out of tune ;  
A messenger of heaven, though but a bird,  
A wanderer through the ether depths sublime  
Come back to stay and cheer our solitude  
Of frosty-prisoned dreams—of all they seem—  
And hints of uproar in the joy of Spring.

Four hundred years have vanished into time  
Since Birds betokened far at sea the land  
Columbus spied with eagle eye at morn,  
The continent of Isabella's faith,  
O'ertopping history's wildest, widest wave.  
But for the prophecy of wings, I ween,  
Th' Atlantic still would wash barbarian shores  
Resounding under oriflammes of war.

When all the wild and wanton winds are blown  
O'er cold and cheerless wastes of snow,  
Come forth the Birds the hope of man to dare.  
So long o'er sunny slopes, the gorgeous glen,  
And piping woods and meadows trailed the song  
Of summer gladness, that the heart is lost  
As on some fairy island castaway.

Go forth on your mission appointed by Heaven,  
O man !  
Make miniature houses for Birds, the waifs of  
the air ;  
Then scatter the seeds and the crumbs of your  
household store  
All 'round their castles of cheer, for princes of  
praise.  
Our innocent friends ! all seasons on wings out-  
spread !  
Four winds of heaven ! an azure world ! a rift  
Through every cloud of every clime—the cheer  
Of every zone. Protect the Birds ! for since  
The stars together sang creation's call  
The Birds have wafted o'er the world in songs  
The voiceful harmony of all the spheres.



## FLOWN

**F**LOWN are the myriad wings that lent  
To earth and sky their blandishment.  
The solar path to southward trends,  
The daylight arc more sharply bends ;  
In bands disperse our feathered friends  
To lands where Summer never ends.  
Emblem of hope the bird that flies,  
The harbinger of finite skies.



## BIRDS BEATITUDE

**W**HERE are the birds of all the skies  
Since first the flight of time began?  
Is there some winged paradise,  
Some favored clime where all the clan  
Find Edenland for them alone,  
Where air and watery wings doth rest?  
Have they but flown some other zone  
In which to build their final nest?

While in the earthly atmosphere,  
With songs that raptured every spot,  
They gave the earth such timely cheer  
That roses bloomed 'round every cot.  
The myriad man hath never known  
The soaring joy of airy wing,  
Or in his grinding, grosser zone,  
Heard what the woodland fairies bring.



Where doth the seraph blue-bird dwell,  
With plumage of the sea and sky?  
Doth he now sport in mystic fell  
Wherein the spirit ages lie?  
Do deep and far-off forests lone  
Resound that harp of all the spheres—  
The sweet superior wood-thrush tone  
That melts in melody all ears?

On what supernal summer shore,  
Where meadows bask in endless day,  
Reverberate forevermore  
The matchless merry roundelay  
Of bob-o-link, our jolly friend?  
Disports he 'round melodious bars  
That with his raptures thrill and blend  
In sweeter songs beyond the stars?

Is there some lark, or nightingale,  
Some robin nesting in the spring,  
Some whip-poor-will that stirs the vale  
Wherein the sunshine linnets sing?  
Where is the pretty yellow bird,  
And swallows circling 'round and 'round?  
The partridge drum what ear hath heard  
On shores where satin birds abound?

Where doth the snow bird build his nest  
In Northern pines or rocky dunes  
Beyond the hope of man's behest?  
Where through the whirling snow attunes  
His frolic of the polar maze?  
Where now the silvery chick-a-dee  
That rounds our dreary winter days  
And cheers our solitudes with glee?

Flies he in far and balmier zones  
The pretty pigeon of our world?  
Upon whose ears are gaily tones  
Of our beloved oriole hurled?  
Where pipes the quail his quaint "bob white"?  
Or hies in wayside nooks the wren?  
Who notes the glorious grossbeak's flight,  
Or hears the starling in the fen?

In what transcendent land of goal  
Doth that superior subtle sense  
Migration stir the plumaged soul?  
Where Winter never comes, would hence  
Toward the South the wild-goose hie  
From force of habit, till it were seen  
That 'round the mystic regions lie  
Eternal living landscapes green?

Do tempting streams and lakes invite  
The snowy swan to sail them o'er?  
Leaps there within, far out of sight,  
As if from some uncertain shore,  
Our fearless lynx-eyed Northern loon?  
Where duck and gull and "dipper" dwell  
Content, like drowsy hour of noon,  
Upon whose peace no hunters fell?

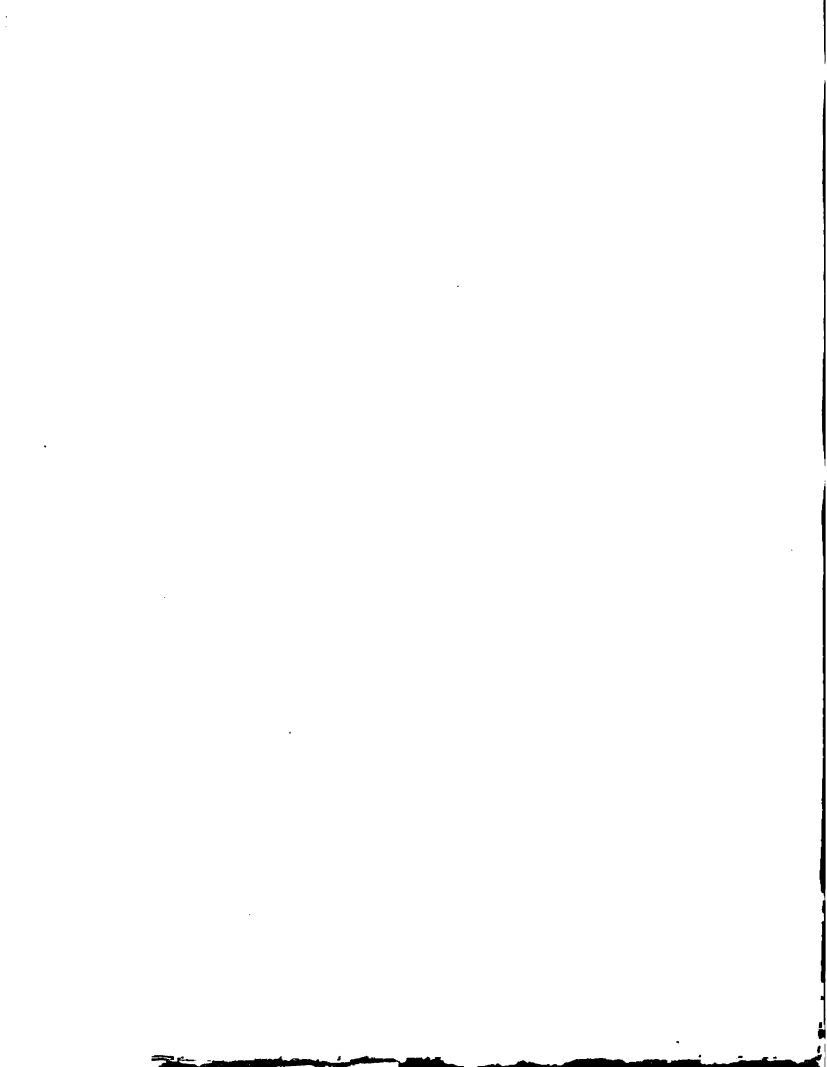
The blithe and winsome humming bird  
Foreshadowing sprite of honeyed flowers,  
Whose tropic wing our summer stirred,  
Could there for him be sunnier hours?  
Doth bird of paradise presage  
On earth the joy of vernal Junes,  
In some resounding hermitage  
Where paired affinity attunes?

Where summer shadows softly lie,  
The timid scarlet tanager  
Seems like a dream to human eye  
In which the crimson sunsets stir.  
Along the forest edges fall  
In droning days of solar heat  
The sharpened cadence of a call,  
The cat-bird challenge of retreat.

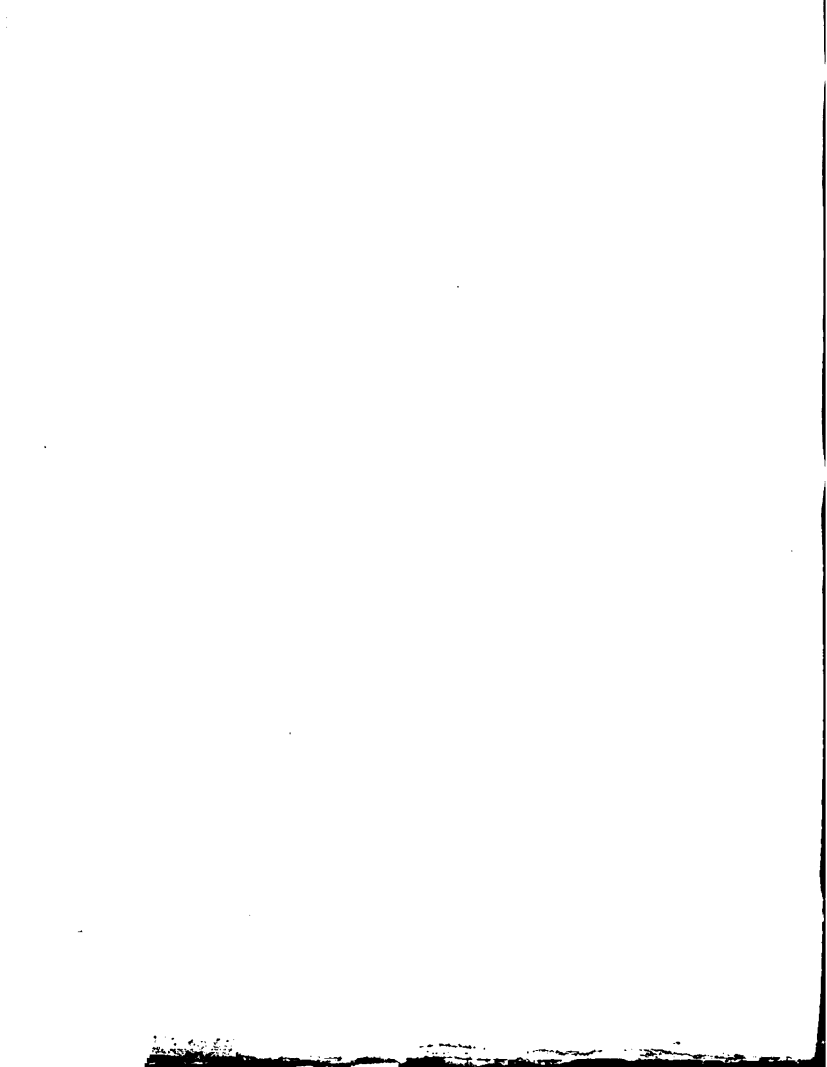
Is there the merry mocking bird,  
The mimic of the solar zone,  
The russet harp Aeolus stirred  
A single throat to play alone?  
Reflects he in another clime  
The harmony of feathered joy,  
Where sing the spirits that sublime  
Enraptured earth without alloy?

No rapture could exceed the voice  
Where all the messengers of air  
In immortality rejoice ;  
Without them earth were never fair.  
If ever any creature lives  
And does deserve perpetual bliss,  
It is the bird, that transport gives,  
And blends all hope of life in this.

The mossy bank, the purling stream,  
The woods in soothing, lofty might,  
The gorgeous glens in summer's gleam,  
The golden rainbow's arch of light,  
The silent charms of every shore,  
The silver mists in clouds unfurled,  
*Would seem of life a part no more*  
*Were there no birds in all the world!*











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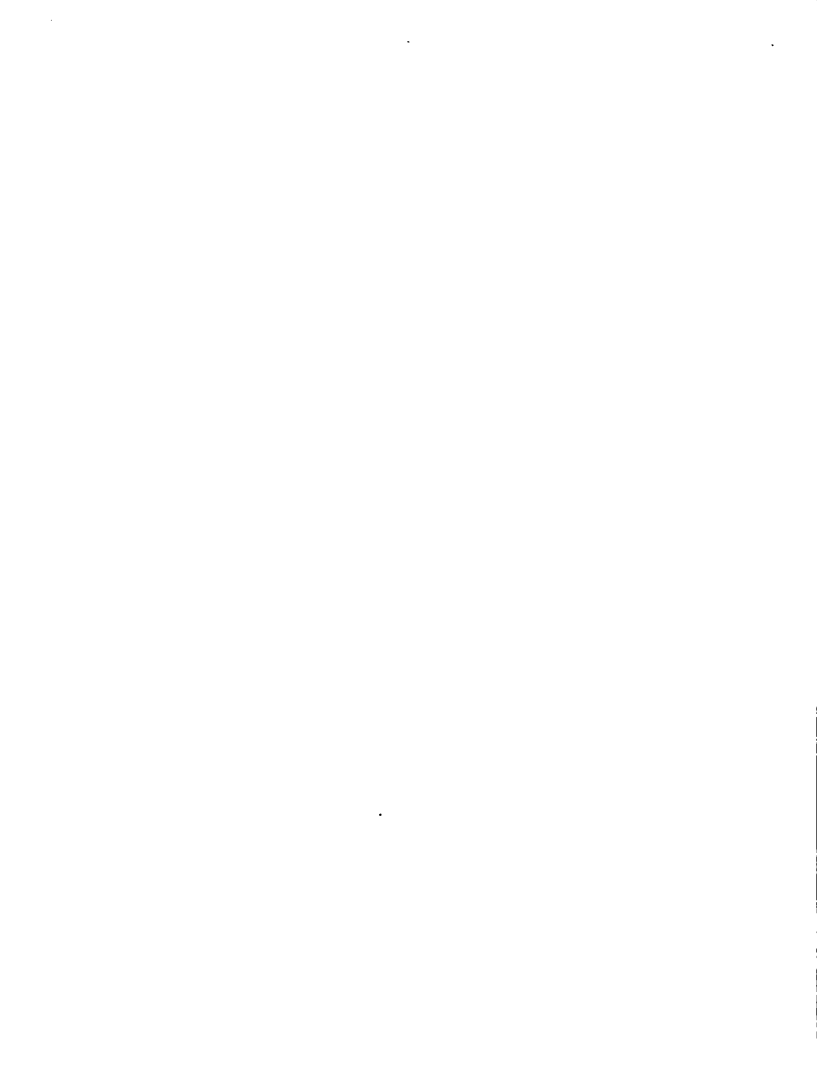
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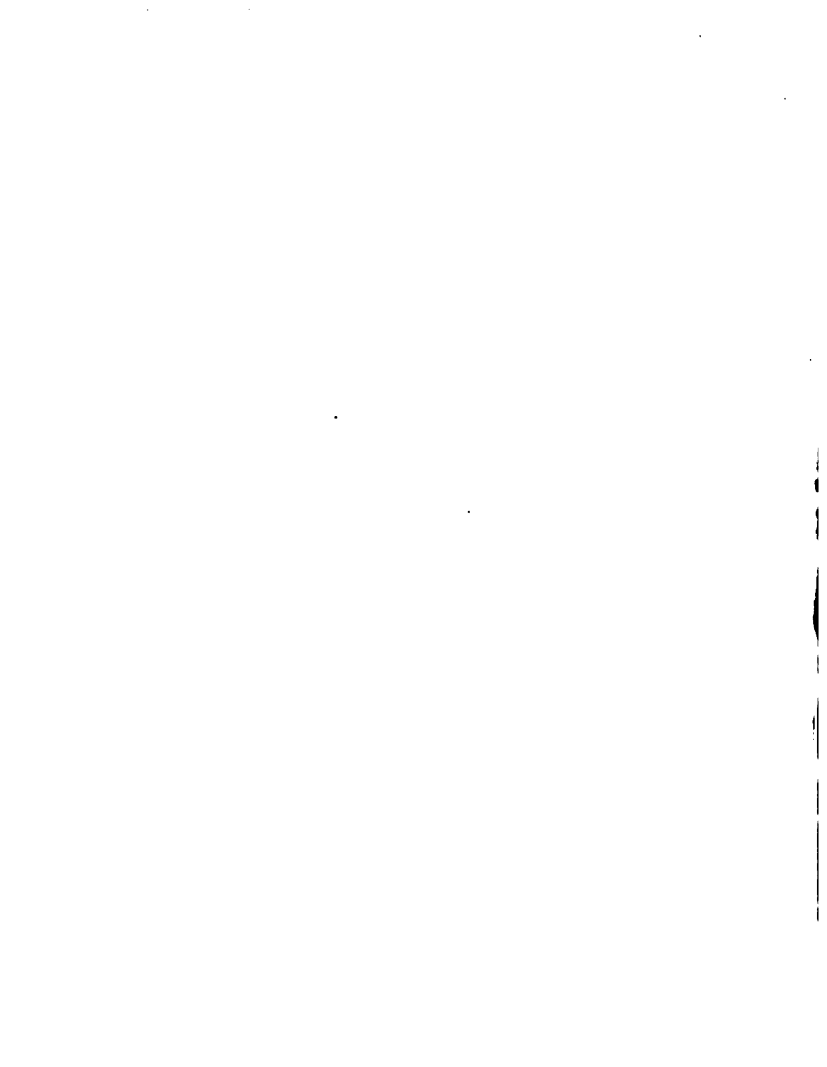
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the  $\mathcal{H}_\infty$  norm of the closed-loop system.

Let  $\mathcal{H}_\infty$  norm of the closed-loop system be denoted by  $\gamma$ . Then, the  $\mathcal{H}_\infty$  norm of the closed-loop system is given by

$$\gamma = \sqrt{\lambda_{\max}(P)} \quad (10)$$

where  $\lambda_{\max}(P)$  is the maximum eigenvalue of the matrix  $P$ .

Let  $\gamma_{\min}$  be the minimum value of  $\gamma$  over all admissible controllers.

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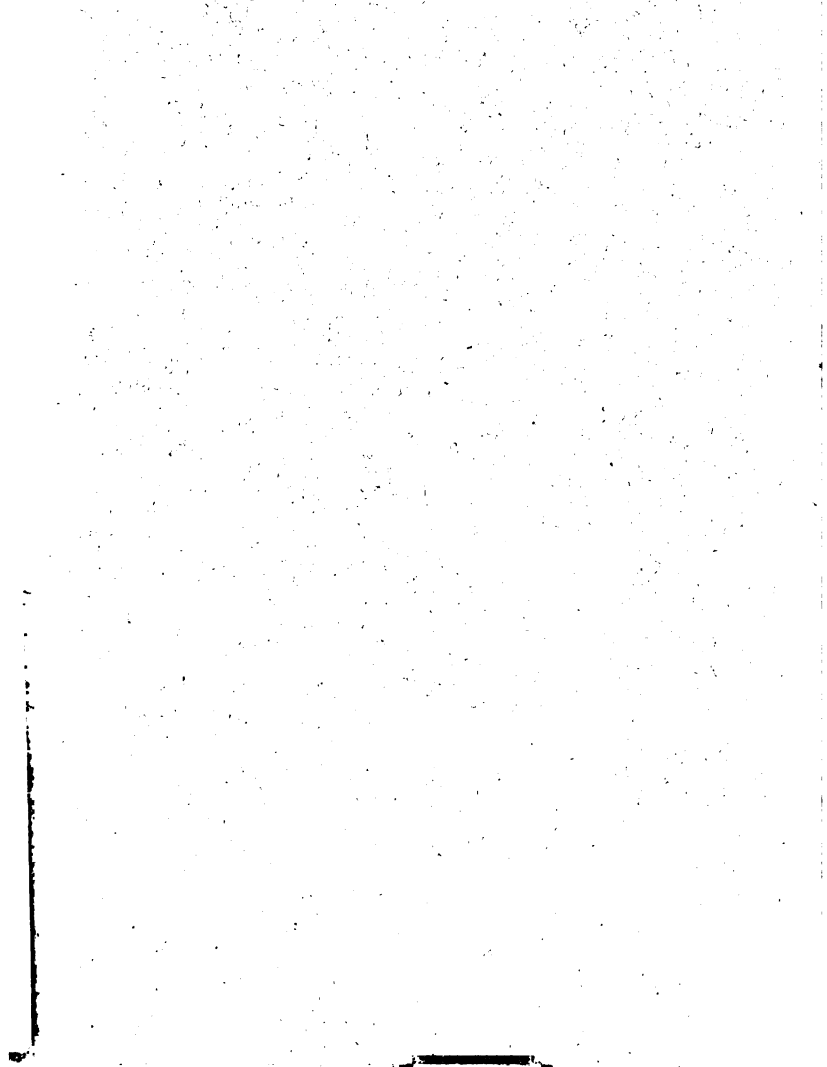
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